

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1 1. A method of extending promotional discounts on items for sale to
2 consumers, comprising
3 identifying a consumer by a unique identifier;
4 promoting a first selected item with a discount or special price to an
5 identified consumer;
6 withdrawing said discount or special price to said identified consumer;
7 granting said discount upon purchase of said item by said identified
8 consumer prior to said withdrawing step; and
9 holding said withdrawing step in abeyance upon an acknowledgment of
10 said promoting step by said identified consumer.

1 2. The method of claim 1 wherein said discount or special price
2 comprises a free sample.

1 3. The method of claim 1 wherein said discount or special price
2 comprises a reduction in price for a plurality of items.

1 4. The method of claim 1 wherein said discount or special prices
2 comprises points that can be accumulated and redeemed for related or unrelated items or
3 cash in the future.

1 5. The method of claim 1 wherein said promoting step comprises
2 direct mail to said identified consumer and wherein said granting step is effective when
3 said direct mail is to reach said identified consumer.

1 6. The method of claim 1 wherein said promoting step comprises
2 posting a notice of said discount for said first selected item on a network accessible from
3 a kiosk at a location selling said item; and said acknowledgment of said promoting step
4 comprises recording a visit to said kiosk by said identified consumer.

1 7. The method of claim 5 wherein said acknowledgment of said
2 promoting step comprises passing a store loyalty card through a reader at said kiosk.

1 8. The method of claim 6 wherein in response to passing said card
2 loyalty card through said reader, said kiosk generates a printed list of inverted promotions
3 to said identified consumer.

1 9. The method of claim 1 wherein said promoting step comprises
2 posting a notice of said discount for said first selected item on a network accessible at a
3 location selling said item; and said acknowledgment of said promoting step comprises
4 scanning said item at said location by a scanning device, wherein said scanning device
5 displays said inverted promotion of said item.

1 10. The method of claim 1 wherein said promoting step comprises
2 posting a notice of said discount for said first selected item on a network accessible at a
3 location selling said item; and said acknowledgment of said promoting step comprises
4 walking past an audio device at said location with a store loyalty card, wherein said audio
5 device voices said inverted promotion of said item.

1 11. The method of claim 1 wherein said identifying step comprises
2 identifying said consumer with a limited direct identification.

1 12. The method of claim 11 wherein said identifying step comprises
2 identifying said consumer with a store loyalty card.

1 13. The method of claim 11 wherein said discount or special price
2 comprises a free sample.

1 14. The method of claim 11 wherein said discount or special price
2 comprises a reduction in price for a plurality of items.

1 15. The method of claim 11 wherein said discount or special prices
2 comprises points that can be accumulated and redeemed for related or unrelated items or
3 cash in the future.

1 16. The method of claim 11 wherein said promoting step comprises
2 direct mail to said identified consumer and wherein said granting step is effective when
3 said direct mail is to reach said identified consumer.

1 17. The method of claim 11 wherein said promoting step comprises
2 posting a notice of said discount for said first selected item on a network accessible from
3 a kiosk at a location selling said item; and said acknowledgment of said promoting step
4 comprises recording a visit to said kiosk by said identified consumer.

1 18. The method of claim 11 wherein said promoting step comprises
2 posting a notice of said discount for said first selected item on a network accessible from
3 a kiosk at a location selling said item; and said acknowledgment of said promoting step
4 comprises recording a visit to said kiosk by said identified consumer.

1 19. The method of claim 11 wherein said promoting step comprises
2 posting a notice of said discount for said first selected item on a network accessible at a
3 location selling said item; and said acknowledgment of said promoting step comprises
4 scanning said item at said location by a scanning device, wherein said scanning device
5 displays said inverted promotion of said item.

1 20. The method of claim 11 wherein said promoting step comprises
2 posting a notice of said discount for said first selected item on a network accessible at a
3 location selling said item; and said acknowledgment of said promoting step comprises
4 walking past an audio device at said location with a store loyalty card, wherein said audio
5 device voices said inverted promotion of said item.

1 21. The method of claim 1 further comprising promoting a second
2 selected item with a discount or special price to said identified consumer.

1 22. The method of claim 21 wherein said promotion step of said
2 second selected item is performed upon said acknowledgment of said promoting step of
3 said first selected item by said identified consumer.

1 23. The method of claim 21 wherein said identifying step comprises
2 identifying said consumer with a limited direct identification and wherein acceptance of
3 said second selected item requires full direct identification of said consumer.

1 24. The method of claim 21 wherein said identifying step comprises
2 identifying said consumer with a limited direct identification and wherein acceptance of
3 said second selected item requires only limited direct identification of said consumer.

25. The method of claim 21 wherein said identifying step comprises identifying said consumer with a full direct identification and wherein acceptance of said second selected item requires full direct identification of said consumer.

26. The method of claim 21 wherein said identifying step comprises identifying said consumer with a full direct identification and wherein acceptance of said second selected item requires only limited direct identification of said consumer.

27. The method of claim 11 wherein purchase of said first selected item by said identified consumer is by credit or debit card.

28. In a store computer network system for one or more stores selling a plurality of items, said system providing prices for said plurality of items to consumers in general and special prices for a first set of selected items to a first set of selected consumers, said system having a first table of prices for said plurality items and a second table of special prices for said first set of selected items for said first set of selected consumers, said system providing a special price for one of said selected items to a selected consumer and otherwise providing a price for an item from said first table if said item has no entry in said second table, a method of providing special prices for a second set of selected items for a second set of selected consumers, comprising

providing a third table of special prices for a second set of selected items to said second set of selected consumers; and

providing entries in said second table for items not in said first set of selected items, said entries set to zero so that a price from said first table is not provided to one of said second set of selected consumers for an item in said second set of selected items.

29. The method of claim 28 wherein said special prices in said third table are set to individual members of said second set of selected consumers.

30. The method of claim 29 wherein said first set of selected consumers are identified by a store loyalty card.

31. The method of claim 30 wherein said first set of selected consumers comprise said second set of selected consumers..

32. In a store computer network system for one or more stores selling a plurality of items, said system providing prices for said plurality of items to consumers in general and special prices for a first set of selected items to a first set of selected consumers, a computer server for said network system comprising

- a first table of prices for said plurality items;
- a second table of special prices for said first set of selected items for said first set of selected consumers, said server providing a special price for one of said selected items to a selected consumer and otherwise providing a price for an item from said first table if said item has no entry in said second table; and
- a third table of special prices for a second set of selected items to a second set of selected consumers, said second table having entries for items not in said first set of selected items, said entries set to zero so that a price from said first table is not provided to one of said second set of selected consumers for an item in said second set of selected items;

whereby special prices for said second set of selected items for said second set of selected consumers is provided.

33. The computer server of claim 32 wherein said special prices in said third table are set to individual members of said second set of selected consumers.

34. The computer server of claim 32 wherein said computer server identifies said first set of selected consumers by a store loyalty card.

35. The computer server of claim 34 wherein said first set of selected consumers comprise said second set of consumers.

36. The method of claim 1 wherein said identifying, promoting, withdrawing, granting and holding steps are performed by a computer network system, and wherein said identified consumer is unable to obtain said discount upon said item prior to said withholding step due to a malfunction of said computer network system, said method further comprising

recording a price paid for said item by said consumer at a location; and

granting a rebate of the difference between said recorded price and said discount at the next purchase of item by said consumer at said location.

1 37. The method of claim 1 further comprising
2 providing a list of maximum possible discounts for each selected item to
3 any identified consumer.

1 38. The method of claim 37 wherein said list is used to enforce
2 boundaries on correct behavior of an inverted promotion system as described in claim 1.

1 39. The method of claim 37 wherein said list is used to facilitate
2 customer service by issuing the best possible promotion given to any customer on a
3 specific item when the system implementing the inverted promotions is not functioning.

1 40. The method of claim 1 further comprising organizing said inverted
2 promotions according to a logical layout pattern

1 41. The method of claim 1 further comprising withholding future
2 inverted promotions from consumers who have not received or acted upon notifications of
3 past inverted promotions.

1 42. The method of claim 1 further comprising grouping a set recipients
2 of inverted promotions to receive the same inverted promotions.

1 43. The method of claim 42 further comprising selectively informing
2 different recipients of a common set of inverted promotions of specific promotions based
3 on limited direct identification.

1 44. The method of claim 1 further comprising accompanying said
2 discount with additional factual information other than discounts or prices.

3 45. The method of claim 1 whereby said promoting step is
4 accomplished by selecting one or more notification mechanisms based on the cost of said
5 notification mechanisms and the customer's history of interacting with different
6 notification mechanisms.